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Trade union membership decreases

The proportion of employees who were trade union members in their main job decreased from 20% in August 2009 to 18% in August 2010. This represents 1.8 million trade union members in their main job, a fall of 47,300 from the previous year, according to figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Public sector employees drove the change, with the proportion of trade union members in their main job falling from 46% in August 2009 to 41% in August 2010. The proportion of private sector employees who were trade union members in their main job remained steady at 14%.

There were a further 75,200 employees who were members of a trade union although not in connection to their main job.

Two thirds of trade union members (66%) had been a trade union member for 5 years or more, compared with 10% who had been a trade union member for less than 1 year.

There were 1.4 million employees who were not currently members of a trade union, although had been previously. Of these, 77% hadn't been a trade union member for 5 years or more, while 4% had been members of a trade union less than 1 year ago. A further 6.5 million (66%) employees had never been a trade union member.

Other findings on trade union membership in main job included:

- the industry with the highest proportion of male employees who were trade union members was Electricity, gas, water and waste services (42%), while for female employees it was Education and training (40%), and
- the occupation with the highest proportion of male employees who were trade union members was Machinery operators and drivers (28%), while for female employees it was Professionals (33%).

More details are available in *Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia, August 2010* (cat. no. 6310.0).

Media note:

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